

# Captain Amasa Delano Led Adventurous Life

By GERSHOM BRADFORD

This celebrated seaman of Duxbury was born on Feb. 21, 1763, and from his early youth led a life of adventure. He learned the ways of the sea and the ways of ships to an unusual degree; his capabilities developed until they covered the wide range from designing a vessel, building her, masting and rigging and then navigating the result of his work to the uttermost parts of the, then large world.

This he did, with his brother's aid, in 1799 when the ship *Perseverance* was built near the mouth of Bluefish River, just below the home of Mrs. Horace Soule. In this vessel he made a 3-year sealing voyage around the world; returning, he refitted and sailed on a 4-year cruise.

In 1879 Amasa Delano sailed in the large ship *Massachusetts* as her second mate. She was a new vessel and was on an important voyage to Canton. Through someone's bad judgment, she was built of green timber. (May I interject that she was not built in Duxbury). The result was that, on her arrival in the Far East, these timbers were found so far gone she was condemned. Delano was left stranded, but not for long. With his usual initiative he secured the job of repairing and refitting a dismantled ship belonging to the Danish East India Company.

## Recognition

The efficient manner in which this task was performed attracted the attention of Commodore John McClure, then preparing to sail with a British squadron for a voyage of survey and discovery in the Pacific. The Commodore was so impressed that he offered Delano a position with a lieutenant's duties and pay, but only accountable to him. The offer was accepted. Delano, so placed, was in a very difficult situation—an alien interloper in the wardroom only under the orders of the Commodore himself.

It speaks loudly for his tact and conduct that he was able to win, not only the respect but the goodwill of the British officers.

It was on this cruise that Captain Delano took part in an unusual punitive expedition against the rebels from the rule of King Abba Thule, of the Palau (Pelew) Islands. This King was an extraordinary savage. He personally was the greatest warrior ever bred in those islands. Yet he was a benevolent ruler, loved by his people who were then in an unusually happy state. However, in the islands more remote, ambitious chiefs occasionally rebelled against his authority. Such a rebellion was taking place when Commodore McClure arrived.

A powerful expedition was organized consisting of "some thousands of men." The Europeans were asked to take part. Delano was assigned to command the large

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**CAPTAIN**

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launch, manned by the squadron's sailors, mounting a 6-pounder cannon, some swivels, small arms and some rather harmless but terrifying Chinese rockets. His position was in the center of the first of three lines of canoes. Before they sailed the King had done a remarkable thing—sent word to the enemy when they would arrive. Delano remonstrated with this unique manner of conducting warfare, telling the King that they should arrive before dawn for a surprise. But Abba Thule replied that war

was bad enough at best and that while he held the English in high esteem, he could not agree with their strategy. If the enemy is attacked in their sleep, he argued, they would in turn fall on him and thereby multiply the evils. "Christians might learn of Abba Thule a fair comment upon the best principles of their own religion," wrote Christian Delano of Pagan Thule.

Arriving off the rebel stronghold a gun was fired for an emissary to come off and communicate. The King's canoe was fast alongside the launch giving Delano a

close view of the proceedings. The rebel war canoe out with a crew that put on a great show of speed and maneuvers of such dexterity as to win Delano's admiration and sympathy. They tied up beside the King and a consultation began. Abba Thule said he was ready to fight. Were they? No, but they would rather than submit to his rule which they felt unjust. They were sent away to see if terms could be accepted. At length an affirmative signal was set on shore.

The King landed requiring that he be shown marks of respect; they were so received. The enemies were friendly, pressing food and refreshment upon them. While the rebel chiefs were deep in discussions of the King's terms, the tide went out leaving the launch aground and Abba Thule told his men they could go out on the bare reef and gather shellfish along with the men of Artingall with whom they fraternized. The English officers and Delano expressed their fears as to their exposed situation, but the King reassured them there would be no treachery, that it was good for the negotiations for the men to be friendly together. It so proved. Several

of the rebel chiefs told Delano that Abba Thule never lied.

While the negotiations went on and on, Delano told the King that he thought the terms too harsh, to which Abba Thule replied that he could not preserve the dignity of his position by asking less and it would be inconsistent with the people's future contentment, to demand more. He patiently waited for three days and nights for an answer, saying that as long as there was a chance of success he would hold off, as he did not want to shed blood needlessly. However, his patience must go to the point of being mistaken for weakness.

The policy prevailed. There was a great ceremony in which the disaffected chiefs humbled themselves by bringing presents to the King on a throne, making obeisance before him. After which there was protracted feasting and finally the fleet sailed for home carrying 60 women as hostages for their late enemy's good conduct.

Delano reported what he saw, but was told that despite all the exalted sentiments held by Abba Thule, they were marred by his barbarous treatment of prisoners taken in battle. Amasa saw none of this and found the reports difficult for him to reconcile with the remarkable attitudes he had witnessed.

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